

News story: More help for vulnerable children to attend top boarding schools

The Department for Education is launching a new service designed to give more vulnerable children the chance to attend some of the country's highest quality independent and state boarding schools.

The Boarding School Partnerships Information Service – which is being launched in collaboration with the Boarding Schools' Association – will link local authorities up with a host of children's charities and boarding schools so they can work together to identify more young people on the edge of care who can be put forward for bursaries and scholarships, helping them attend some of the country's best schools.

The government is committed to enabling all children – regardless of their background – to reach their full potential, and this announcement builds on wider programmes to support vulnerable children in all schools. This includes named headteachers who are responsible for supporting their education and almost £2.5 billion funding this year for state schools to support them through the Pupil Premium.

It follows the recent launch of the [Unlocking Talent, Fulfilling Potential](#) plan by the Education Secretary, designed to create opportunities on every young person's doorstep and boost social mobility.

Launching the new partnership, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for the School System Lord Agnew said:

Children who have previously been in care or are at risk of care have often gone through difficult, challenging experiences that can have a lasting impact throughout their lives. These placements won't be right for every child, but the pastoral care and educational support provided by our top boarding schools can have profound benefits for some young people.

I'm delighted that so many organisations are working with us to help create more of these opportunities for these children, helping them to get the best start in life and to go on to reach their full potential, no matter what their background.

Latest figures show the attainment gap between disadvantaged children and their more affluent peers is narrowing – by more than 10% at Key Stage 2 and 7% at GCSE since 2011. However, vulnerable children – including who have previously been in care, have left the care system or are at risk of care – still often have poorer educational outcomes. Research shows a correlation between the boarding environment and improved educational outcomes for

vulnerable children.

A boarding school placement can offer these children the possibility of term-time respite that also helps them to develop relationships with the adults working at those schools, alongside a home environment they can return to during the weekends or holidays. These types of arrangements can be particularly beneficial where children are living with parents experiencing mental health difficulties, or with extended families who are unable to cope full-time with a child.

The partnership will aim to create more opportunities for children on the edge of care in addition to the 1,000 young people who are already supported by charities and boarding schools. The service is in collaboration with the Boarding Schools' Association, Buttle UK, Reedham Children's Trust, Royal National Children's Springboard Foundation and King Edward's School in Witley.

King Edward's School is one school already involved in the partnership. It already provides boarding places to several pupils in, or on the edge of, care.

John Attwater, King Edward's Witley Headmaster said:

We know from long experience that boarding can provide a life-transforming opportunity for vulnerable children and their families, and it is core to our founding mission as a school. I am delighted that this service will give local authorities and others the information they need to consider boarding as an option for children who need it, and put them in touch with schools such as King Edward's and charities that can make it happen.

Robin Fletcher, Chief Executive of the Boarding Schools' Association said:

Britain's boarding schools provide an unrivalled education and the kind of individual attention, security and structure that can especially help young people who have had a difficult start to their lives. The involvement of charities and local authorities in boarding school placements shows just what can be achieved and we look forward to doing even more.

Chief Executive of Reedham Children's Trust, Sarah Smart said:

Reedham Children's Trust seeks to help disadvantaged and vulnerable children living in desperately difficult circumstances, whose families are struggling to care for them. Very special care is taken to find the right boarding school to meet the needs of the individual child. In such cases, boarding school is a second home for the child or young person, providing a nurturing, supportive

and stimulating environment.

The service is being overseen by an expert voluntary board, comprising of children's services professionals, head teachers, charity executives and government officials. Together they will support local authorities, charities and schools to create these opportunities for young people.